

# MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

## Success Stories from the Field

### Brake Parts Inc - Erie

#### Northwest Pennsylvania Industrial Resource Center

#### Brake Parts Training Program Succeeds in Erie

##### Client Profile:

Brake Parts is a twenty-one year old company that machines and packages automotive rotors and brake drums. Its market is basically in replacement parts and the after market segment. Brake Parts is located in North East, Pennsylvania, and employs 185 people.

##### Situation:

Although the company had a reputation for introducing new designs faster, at better quality and lower cost than any competitor, domestic or foreign, it was time to introduce new aftermarket rotor and drum applications to the marketplace. This desire to 'lead the pack' meant increased employee training. Although training was a priority, there was no documented training plan. The company contacted the Northwest Pennsylvania Industrial Resource Center (NWIRC), a NIST MEP network affiliate, for assistance.

##### Solution:

NWIRC agreed with Brake Parts that it made sense to strengthen the existing empowerment culture to a full-blown system of self-leadership through intense training of every employee. NWIRC conducted a Training Assessment, identified all the training needs to assure a culture of self-leadership, and located appropriate providers of such training. By self-leadership, Brake Parts means that all full-time employees have a solid understanding of how the company runs, comparable to the level of knowledge expected of a manager in a well-run company. It was also important that everyone, including office people, production people, and people from the other plant across town, receive cross-functional training.

As a result of training recommended by NWIRC's Training Assessment, employees at the company have improved their competencies:

- Every production cell and department is defined as a "business within the business." Each employee completely understands the annual business plan and shares a role in developing specific business goals and implementing improvement strategies. Each "business" has to measure its progress, make regular performance reports, justify its investments, establish improvement projects, and in every other way behave as though it was a stand-alone operation.

- Every production operator is part of a cell team able to develop and maintain statistics that measure production performance, quality, yield, setup times, tool life and operating utilization. This is in addition to doing their own setups, equipment operation, blueprint reading, and machine programming.

- Each production team does its own interviewing, has direct involvement in the hiring process, and participates in first level discipline. The members of the team are expected to evaluate new cutting tools, determine cell layout, achieve continual setup reduction, monitor equipment safety, and implement improvement processes. Each "business" has to help develop best practices that can be

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adopted by the other "businesses." The "businesses" engage in friendly competition that helps improve the company's overall performance.

NWIRC's Max Gill said, "All this attention to training has paid off. Brake Parts is one of the best-operated companies in Erie."

### **Results:**

- \* Improved employee competencies.
- \* Improved operations.

### **Testimonial:**

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